

## TRAINING EMPLOYEES FOR THE FAST-GROWING BIORATIONALS INDUSTRY

**ABOUT VALENT BIOSCIENCES LLC.** Valent BioSciences Corporation (VBC) manufactures mosquito-control products, as well as other microbial insecticides, nematicides, and plant growth regulators used in production agriculture. VBC's products are considered "biorationals," which refers to pesticides and other substances designed to have a low environmental impact. The company opened a \$150M facility in rural Osage, Iowa, that now has over one hundred employees.

**THE CHALLENGE.** For decades, VBC products were manufactured outside Chicago by an industry partner. However, in 2012, VBC made the decision to produce its own biorationals, and executives planned to build the new facility 350 miles away in Osage, Iowa. The new facility required up to one hundred new employees trained in food safety, microbiology, quality systems and in-process testing in a completely rural environment. Leadership turned to CIRAS, part of the MEP National Network™, for assistance in streamlining the biorational manufacturing process and locating and training employees.

**MEP CENTER'S ROLE.** CIRAS and its partners worked with VBC to provide technical assistance and workforce training. VBC employees completed trainings in microbiology, food safety, ISO 9001, Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) plans, and OSHA requirements, and the company saved on its investment in workforce training. Two years later, VBC is benefitting from a pipeline of well-trained Iowa State University graduates. The company hired seven Iowa State grads and interns when it opened and later added nine more. VBC also worked with ISU mechanical engineering students on a semester-long capstone project.

The Osage facility is touted as the first plant in the world built from the beginning for biorationals. Bryony Bonning, an Iowa State professor of entomology and director of the National Science Foundation's Center for Arthropod Management Technologies (CAMTech), estimates that the global microbial pesticide market was worth \$900 million in 2012. Growth has come partly via consumer demand for organic products, but also from an increasing demand for biorational pesticides to use in parallel with conventional pest control.

"CIRAS has provided exceptional expertise in many subjects to jumpstart our manufacturing site. They have provided subject matter expert training to regulation and standard guidance and when we need help, they are only a call away."

-Jennifer Burton, Quality Manager

## RESULTS



**\$200,000** workforce investment



Savings of **\$500,000**



Added **16** jobs for Iowa State grads and interns

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